



Trading-off Church Participation for Political Engagement: A Necessity for Political Effectiveness and Influence?

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ABSTRACT

Active involvement in the church can provide a religious capital for political engagements but at the same time, it can prevent or limit the political participation of church members. Many studies have concentrated on the factors which either promote or discourage political mobilisation and participation by churches. However, there is little work on the impact of political involvement on church participation, and this paper seeks to contribute to filling this gap. It provides unique data and contributes to the broader discourse on church and politics. Using a Mixed-Method approach, this study was conducted with five selected churches in Ghana. The study's main objective was to examine the involvement of Christian politicians in church activities, and the churches' appreciation of the implications of political engagement for church participation. The paper contends that politics requires quality time investments. Christian politicians may sometimes have to trade-off time in church for political activities in order to be effective and to influence the political sphere. On the other hand, they face a lot of challenges and may need the church to stand by them. Churches that want their members to go into politics need to understand this. And therefore, they should not 'abandon' them but rather support, encourage and keep close contact with them.

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INTRODUCTION

Religion generally and the church especially is believed to be an avenue for political mobilisation and participation. Some have argued though that, "religiosity, by itself, often serves as a deterrent rather than mobilising force for political engagement."¹ In addition, high levels of identity with certain denominations due to their doctrine can decrease one's support for, and participation in political activities.² For example, conservatives of the Anabaptists and Mennonite Traditions advocate for a strict separation of both the church as an institution and the individual Christian from the state and

¹ Mariya Y. Omelicheva and Ranya Ahmed, "Religion and Politics: Examining the Impact of Faith on Political Participation," *Religion, State and Society* 46, no. 1 (January 2, 2018): 4–25, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09637494.2017.1363345>.

² Kyle C. Kopko, "Religious Identity and Political Participation in the Mennonite Church USA," *Politics and Religion* 5, no. 2 (August 30, 2012): 367–93, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1755048312000077>.

politics.³ They believed that “withdrawal from a fallen world is the best way of maintaining the witness of the church.”⁴ This is because they view the state and politics as evil and corrupt.⁵ Also, Reich and dos Santos assert that some evangelical Christians in Latin America ‘reject’ political participation.⁶ However, there is sufficient literature to show that the church has been and can be used to promote political mobilization and participation. Greenberg states “Church can serve as an important political institution, generating way to engage the political process.”⁷ Others have argued that even church attendance and membership can influence political involvement, especially electoral activities. According to McKenzie “research has shown that church attendance can affect political participation including voting.”⁸ This is supported by Jones-Correa who states that “church membership has a positive and significant impact on political participation, particularly electoral politics.”⁹

Amidst all these debates, however, there is little data on the impact political participation has and could have on church involvement. The paper adopted a Mixed-Method approach to explore and examine how the political participation of Christian politicians in Ghana has affected their involvement in church activities. It was also of interest to investigate the views of churches on this, and their response. The paper begins with a literature review followed by the methodology used. It proceeds with the findings and discussion, and then the conclusion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Church as a place for political mobilisation and involvement stems from its potential to give skills needed for civic participation and provide social networking with trust and shared values among members. These can be harnessed for political engagements including volunteerism, recruitment and mobilisation for political and other civic purposes. Patterson states “...religious organizations....can provide skills that members can transfer to political activity.”¹⁰ McKenzie buttresses this in his assertion that “... the Church facilitates political participation by teaching citizens important civic skills.”¹¹ In addition, Greenberg contends that locally-based institutions such as the church, “are important to connecting people to the political process” and that participation in such institutions “serves as a social capital and make members to build trust and norms which help them to act collectively...”¹² Also, Radu and Tofalvi assert that “religious values and practices influence both conventional and unconventional participation.”¹³ Moreover, Ludasen posits that in some jurisdictions, those who regularly attend religious programmes have been found to have a higher tendency to

³ Politics in this paper is defined as, the administration of public goods and ordering of society for the common good by the state and associated institutions, government, and political parties which usually constitute a government.

⁴ Kiem-Koik Kwa, “Towards a Model of Engagement in the Public Realm for the Methodist Church in Singapore,” (PhD Thesis Asbury Theological Seminary, Kentucky, 2007), 36.

⁵ David M Smolin, “Church, State, and International Human Rights: A Theological Appraisal,” *Notre Dame L. Rev.* 73 (1997): 1516.

⁶ Gary Reich and Pedro dos Santos, “The Rise (and Frequent Fall) of Evangelical Politicians: Organization, Theology, and Church Politics,” *Latin American Politics and Society* 55, no. 04 (January 2, 2013): 1, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-2456.2013.00209.x>.

⁷ Anna Greenberg, “The Church and the Revitalization of Politics and Community,” *Political Science Quarterly* 115, no. 3 (September 1, 2000): 377, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2658124>.

⁸ Brian D McKenzie, “Self-Selection, Church Attendance, and Local Civic Participation,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 40, no. 3 (2001): 479–88.

⁹ Michael A. Jones-Correa and David L. Leal, “Political Participation: Does Religion Matter?,” *Political Research Quarterly* 54, no. 4 (December 2, 2001): 764, <https://doi.org/10.1177/106591290105400404>.

¹⁰ Eric Patterson, “Religious Activity and Political Participation: The Brazilian and Chilean Cases,” *Latin American Politics and Society* 47, no. 1 (2005): 1–29.

¹¹ McKenzie, “Self-Selection, Church Attendance, and Local Civic Participation,” 480.

¹² Greenberg, “The Church and the Revitalization of Politics and Community,” 377.

¹³ Bogdan Radu and Zselyke Tofalvi, “Religious Determinants of Political Participation in Poland and Romania,” n.d. accessed December 13, 2022, <https://cens.ceu.edu/sites/cens.ceu.edu/files/attachment/article/579/radu-tofalvi.religiousdeterminantsofpoliticalparticipationinpolandandromania.pdf>

volunteer for political parties.¹⁴ He adds “studies have also consistently found that those who volunteer, in general, participate in politics more frequently.”¹⁵

Scheufele, Nisbert, and Brossard allude to this in their assertion that networks and volunteer groups where discussions take place can serve as avenues for civic and political recruitment. And such networks can be found in churches.¹⁶ According to Campbell, the tight social networks formed through involvement in intensive church activity “can at times facilitate rapid and intense political mobilization.”¹⁷ Moreover, religious beliefs which are imbibed through religious teachings are able to influence the political behaviour of adherents.¹⁸ Campbell supports this and states that “churches can be understood as institutions that shape their members’ behaviour.... which in turn have systematic implications for participation in political activity.”¹⁹

Further, according to McClendon and Riedl, most Christian sermons in Sub-Saharan Africa, even when not explicitly political, have the potential to influence congregants’ political thoughts and engagement.²⁰ Frahm-Arp aligns with this, and states that some churches through their sermons “influence how some of their members think and behave politically.”²¹ All these can be summed up in Jones-Correa’s claim that “by far, the more important contribution to an explanation of political participation is made by churches’ central civic association roles.”²² However, arising from these arguments is the question of whether church attendance will ‘automatically’ predispose congregants to the resources necessary for political engagements and actually participate.

Among those who hold that the church can promote political mobilisation and participation, are those who argue that mere church membership and attendance do not positively influence political participation. Djupe and Grant argue “there is little direct, automatic connection of religious and political activities for religious adherents...”²³ Also, Martison and Wilkening claim that “church attendance is related to voting in primary and local elections but not to talking to local officials.”²⁴ McKenzie supports these and states that “literature shows that church attendance plays little to no role in people’s participation in non-voting such as local government meetings.”²⁵ The argument that church involvement may influence voting but not non-voting political activities is supported by Secret, Johnson and Forrest. They contend that in America for instance, “denominational affiliation has been found to relate party identification and to the probability of voting” among the general population.²⁶

¹⁴ Susanne Wallman Lundåsen, “Religious Participation and Civic Engagement in a Secular Context: Evidence from Sweden on the Correlates of Attending Religious Services,” *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 33, no. 3 (2022): 627–40.

¹⁵ Lundasen, “Religious Participation and Civic Engagement in a Secular Context: Evidence from Sweden on the Correlates of Attending Religious Services,” 3.

¹⁶ Dietram A. Scheufele et al., “Social Structure and Citizenship: Examining the Impacts of Social Setting, Network Heterogeneity, and Informational Variables on Political Participation,” *Political Communication* 21, no. 3 (July 2004): 315–38, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584600490481389>.

¹⁷ David E Campbell, “Acts of Faith: Churches and Political Engagement,” *Political Behavior* 26 (2004): 156.

¹⁸ Jonathan Fox, *Political Secularism, Religion, and the State: A Time Series Analysis of Worldwide Data* (Cambridge University Press, 2015), 3.

¹⁹ Campbell, “Acts of Faith: Churches and Political Engagement,” 156.

²⁰ Gwyneth H McClendon and Rachel Beatty Riedl, *From Pews to Politics: Religious Sermons and Political Participation in Africa* (Cambridge University Press, 2019), 5.

²¹ Maria Frahm-Arp, “The Political Rhetoric in Sermons and Select Social Media in Three Pentecostal Charismatic Evangelical Churches Leading up to the 2014 South African Election,” *Journal for the Study of Religion* 28, no. 1 (2015): 117.

²² Jones-Correa and Leal, “Political Participation: Does Religion Matter?” 751.

²³ Paul A Djupe and J Tobin Grant, “Religious Institutions and Political Participation in America,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 40, no. 2 (2001): 303–14.

²⁴ Oscar B. Martinson and E. A. Wilkening, “Religious Participation and Involvement in Local Politics Throughout the Life Cycle,” *Sociological Focus* 20, no. 4 (October 1987): 309–18, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00380237.1987.10570961>.

²⁵ McKenzie, “Self-Selection, Church Attendance, and Local Civic Participation,” 479.

²⁶ Philip E Secret, James B Johnson, and Audrey W Forrest, “The Impact of Religiosity on Political Participation and Membership in Voluntary Associations among Black and White Americans,” *Journal of Black Studies* 21, no. 1 (1990): 87–102.

However, others are of the view that church attendance alone does not influence participation in both voting and non-voting activities. Brown and Brown argue that church attendance alone has little or no influence on both conventional and non-conventional political engagements. They state “simply attending church does not provide enough social capital resources...for voting and nonvoting political activities.”²⁷ Djupe and Grant buttress this and contend that “contrary to previous work, church-gained civic skills and religious tradition do not directly affect political participation among those currently active in religious institutions.”²⁸

Beyond ‘Mere’ Church Attendance

The potential of the church as an avenue for political mobilisation especially concerning non-voting and nonconventional political activities depends on other factors either than simply church attendance. It largely depends on the church’s own openness to political discourses, and individual congregants’ interests and level of involvement. Brown and Brown argue that the resources needed for political participation are largely from “those churches that espouse a civic culture where members are exposed to political discussions...”²⁹ Scheufele, Nisbert, and Brossard hold a similar position and assert “political discussion can have an indirect influence on political participation...” They add that, the impact “is to a significant degree mediated by the different viewpoints that individuals are exposed to when they discuss politics in these settings.”³⁰ It becomes even more effective when such discussions are deliberately connected to the relationship between church teachings and activities, and public engagements. Djupe and Grant assert that “churches bring their parishioners more effectively into the political process through the recruitment of members to politics and when members come to see their church activity as having political consequences.”³¹ They add that “conscious efforts to derive political benefit from religious activity are necessary or that someone must link the sacred and political for adherents.”³² They posit that when religious leaders hold political meetings in Church, it “can increase the probability that their members will become active in the political process.”³³ The need for the church to relate and make its teachings relevant for public engagement is advanced by public and political theologians such as Metz³⁴ and Welker.³⁵

Coupled with the political discussion and connection between church teachings and civic engagements, is the individual adherents’ active involvement in groups in the church. Through their involvement in such groups, they develop certain skills, character and knowledge needed in the political sphere. Brown and Brown opine that “involvement in church committee life is important to...civic skill development (e.g., communication, writing, and organizing skills), which increases these church activists’ competence and confidence to participate in costly and risky political acts.”³⁶ Djupe and Gilbert add to this by stating that “...we find evidence that the social homogeneity of

²⁷ R. K. Brown and R. E. Brown, “Faith and Works: Church-Based Social Capital Resources and African American Political Activism,” *Social Forces* 82, no. 2 (December 1, 2003): 617–41, <https://doi.org/10.1353/sof.2004.0005>.

²⁸ Djupe and Grant, “Religious Institutions and Political Participation in America,” 303.

²⁹ Brown and Brown, “Faith and Works: Church-Based Social Capital Resources and African American Political Activism,” 617.

³⁰ Scheufele et al., “Social Structure and Citizenship: Examining the Impacts of Social Setting, Network Heterogeneity, and Informational Variables on Political Participation,” 315.

³¹ Djupe and Grant, “Religious Institutions and Political Participation in America,” 303.

³² Djupe and Grant, “Religious Institutions and Political Participation in America,” 303.

³³ Djupe and Grant, “Religious Institutions and Political Participation in America,” 310.

³⁴ Johann Baptist Metz, “Faith in History and Society: Towards a Practical Fundamental Theology,” *Religious Studies* 19, no. 4 (1980), 89.

³⁵ Michael Welker, “The Future Tasks of Political Theology,” in *Political Theology: Contemporary challenges and future directions*, eds., Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, K. Tanner and M. Welker (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013), 75.

³⁶ Brown and Brown, “Faith and Works: Church-Based Social Capital Resources and African American Political Activism,” 617.

church-based small groups allows for greater individual skill development.”³⁷ These, therefore, show that one will have to be regular in church and actively participate in its activities in order to harness the resources needed for political engagement. It would also better a person’s fortunes in terms of courting Christian support and votes in elections. This calls for the commitment of one’s time and energy. However, the involvement of politics itself demands more time from political actors. This tension has to be understood and well managed by churches who promote political participation, and Christian politicians.

Politics Requires Quality Time Investment

Quaidoo contends that to have an impactful political engagement or career demands that one shows interest and actively participates in various levels of political activities.³⁸ Also, one’s ability to recruit others to join is an important political resource.³⁹ He adds that participating in one’s communities, joining social clubs and organisations are important social requirements for a successful political career.⁴⁰ Similarly, Ludasen opines that “the political parties often rely on their volunteers to help with campaigning in, for example, national and local elections.”⁴¹ In addition, Ann Pontes argue that to engage in politics requires one to attend various meetings and actively participate. All these mean that, those who aspire to be in politics have to prepare to invest their time. Radu and Tofalvi assert that there are those who have more time to participate in politics.⁴² For a religious person or a Christian to give the needed time to politics may depend on whether politics is a priority. Djupe and Grant state that there are Christian traditions and individuals who prefer religious activities to political activities.⁴³ These are likely to give more time to religious activities with little or no attention to politics.

All the above show that, there will be a time trade-off between active political involvement and active church participation. Campbell argues that, though significant investments of time and energy into church activities can enforce social networks, and hence enhance political mobilization, it can also be a disincentive to political participation. He explains that “congregants’ service within their congregations comes at the expense of voluntarism in the wider community.”⁴⁴ He further asserts that for some church traditions, “the time spent in church service is indicative of a conscious withdrawal from the wider community.”⁴⁵ Also, it has been established that political discussions and meetings in churches, intentionally linking church teachings with civic responsibility, and individual congregant’s active participation in church small groups such as committees, all contribute to political participation. However, there are still those who argue that even these are not enough. Individual religious adherents have to participate both in religious and secular groups to enhance their political engagements. Ludasen asserts that “active engagement in a political party is likely to extend beyond church-related

³⁷ Paul A Djupe and Christopher P Gilbert, “The Resourceful Believer: Generating Civic Skills in Church,” *The Journal of Politics* 68, no. 1 (2006): 116.

³⁸ Mr. P.K.K. Quaidoo was a Catholic, an expert philosopher and a politician. He was a minister in Kwame Nkrumah’s government. He was known for his courage including criticising certain policies of Nkrumah’s government he thought was inimical to Ghanaians [cf: Peter K. Sarpong, *Aspects of Ghanaian Ethos: A Compendium of articles, lectures and talks on various socio-cultural and religious topics* (Ghana: Digibooks Ghana Ltd., 2019), 36-37]. He held several portfolios as a cabinet minister: Trade and Labour (1957-58); Communications (1958), Commerce and Industry (1958-60); and Social Welfare (1960-61) [cf: P.K.K. Quaidoo, *The Experience of Politics: A Manual for Ghanaian and African Politicians* (Ghana: Quaidoo Publications, n.d)]

³⁹ Quaidoo, *The Experience of Politics: A Manual for Ghanaian and African Politicians* (Ghana: Quaidoo Publications, n.d):28-29.

⁴⁰ Quaidoo, *The Experience of Politics: A Manual for Ghanaian and African Politicians*, 22-23.

⁴¹ Lundasen, “Religious Participation and Civic Engagement in a Secular Context: Evidence from Sweden on the Correlates of Attending Religious Services,” 9.

⁴² Radu and Tofalvi, *Religious determinants of political participation in Poland and Roman*

⁴³ Djupe and Grant, “Religious Institutions and Political Participation in America,” 311.

⁴⁴ Campbell, “Acts of Faith: Churches and Political Engagement,” 158.

⁴⁵ Campbell, “Acts of Faith: Churches and Political Engagement,” 166.

contexts.”⁴⁶ Also, Omelicheva and Ahmed posit that “it is the membership in religious organisations and other voluntary associations of a secular nature that make individuals more likely to engage in political activity.”⁴⁷

Theologically, some have viewed politics and other vocations as calling from God just as the clergy or priests are called.”⁴⁸ The paper aligns itself with this position. Consequently, as the clergy devotes most of their time to their priestly or ecclesiastical duties, Christian politicians are to devote quality time and energy to their political responsibilities if they are to be effective and faithful. Christians in other vocations are likely to spend less time in church and doing church work than the clergy and other church workers. Generally, all vocations require time investments but some may require more time than others. Politics especially party politics, is one such vocation which requires relatively more time. Political parties are local and national in nature. The party members are to serve to promote both. Politicians especially in Africa and Ghana, are seen as representatives of the whole community. They must be seen to be interested and be involved directly and indirectly in whatever goes on in the community. Coupled with these are political campaigns, advocacies, lobbying and the likes, all of which are time consuming. The clergy and their congregants have to come to terms with this. Understanding the political context is important for effective engagements.⁴⁹ The church’s appreciation and understanding of the time investment needed to be made by Christian politicians will make it to adopt the right attitude and approaches to engage them effectively.

METHODOLOGY

To answer these questions, and explore the subject, the study adopted the Mixed-Methods approach to collect primary data from the research unit through interviews and survey questionnaires. A semi-structured interview guide was used to interview the clergy and the politicians in the churches. They were selected through purposive and snow-balling sampling techniques respectively. Eight clergy were interviewed; two each from the Methodist Church Ghana, the Church of Pentecost (COP) and the Catholic Church, and one each from Anglican and the International Central Gospel Church (ICGC). Twenty (27) Christian politicians were interviewed instead of the initial target of thirty (30) with three (3) from ICGC and six each from the other four churches. Using a simple random sampling technique, three hundred (300) survey respondents were selected with sixty (60) from each of the five churches. The study employed three research assistants to explain some of the questions where necessary. All these ensured that respondents provided well-informed answers to the questions. To ensure confidentiality, all informants were codified. Members of the Clergy were classified as *Key Informants* (KI and their codes were KI1 to KI8. The Christian politicians were classified as *Research Participants politicians* (RPp) and assigned codes from RPp1 to RPp27. Where necessary, only KI and RPp are used for a particular clergy and Christian politician respectively. Last but not least, survey respondents (congregants) were classified as *Research Participants congregants* (RPc). They were treated as a group hence codes were not assigned to them individually.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section is on the discourse of the field data and comprises three main thematic areas. These are: views on Christian participation in politics; the responsibility of the Church towards Christian politicians, and the involvement of Christian politicians in church activities. The section also includes and begins with the demographics of the respondents. The study found that the three hundred (300) survey respondents comprise one hundred and eighty-two (182) males representing 60.7 percent and

⁴⁶ Lundasen, “Religious Participation and Civic Engagement in a Secular Context: Evidence from Sweden on the Correlates of Attending Religious Services,” 9.

⁴⁷ Omelicheva and Ahmed, “Religion and politics: examining the impact of faith on political participation,” 4.

⁴⁸ Andrew T B McGowan, “Church and State: The Contribution of Church History to Evangelical Models for Public Theology.,” *European Journal of Theology* 14, no. 1 (2005), 10.

⁴⁹ Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion* (Edinburgh : Edinburgh University Press, 1995).

one hundred and eighteen (118) females representing 39.3 percent. The majority of the respondents were within the 18-29 and 30 -39 age brackets representing 48.0 percent and 36.3 percent respectively. An overwhelming majority, 283 representing 94.3 percent of the survey respondents had tertiary education (Table 1). This means, to a large extent, they could read and appreciate the questions.

Table 1: Demographics of Respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Church				
ICGC	60	20	20	20
COP	60	20	20	40
Methodist	60	20	20	60
Catholic	60	20	20	80
Anglican	60	20	20	100
Total	300	100	100	
Sex				
Male	182	60.7	60.7	60.7
Female	118	39.3	39.3	100
Total	300	100	100	
Age (years)				
Age Grouping				
18-29	144	48	48	48
30-39	109	36.3	36.3	84.3
40-49	31	10.3	10.3	94.7
50-60	8	2.7	2.7	97.3
60+	8	2.7	2.7	100
Total	300	100	100	
Educational Background				
SHS	17	5.7	5.7	5.7
Tertiary	283	94.3	94.3	100
Total	100	100	100	

Source: Field Study 2022

Views on Christian Participation in Politics

The positions of the clergy on Christians joining politics were both their personal convictions as well as their church's doctrinal beliefs. The general understanding of politics among the clergy was that, it is 'governance and the management of public resources for the common good.' In the view of KI6 and KI4 "seeking the good of humanity is godly and consistent with Christian teachings." KI1 supports this and said that the church encourages and should continue to encourage individual Christians to be in active politics including partisan politics. According to KI4, this is important because "if you are not involved in politics, you allow others to rule you and you cannot blame them when they make mistakes" He opines that this makes the church an indirect actor in governance. KI7 refers to Jesus saying that Christians "are the salt of the earth and the light of the world." He argued that the church "cannot be salt without impacting the world and cannot be light without providing illumination."⁵⁰

Therefore, the church has a role in the management of the affairs of the society. KI3 believes that the church should be actively involved in the governance of Ghana and beyond. He explained that this position is underpinned by the biblical conviction that "the kingdom of the earth must become the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ." According to one of the KI of the COP, the church's political views

⁵⁰ Interview with KI7.

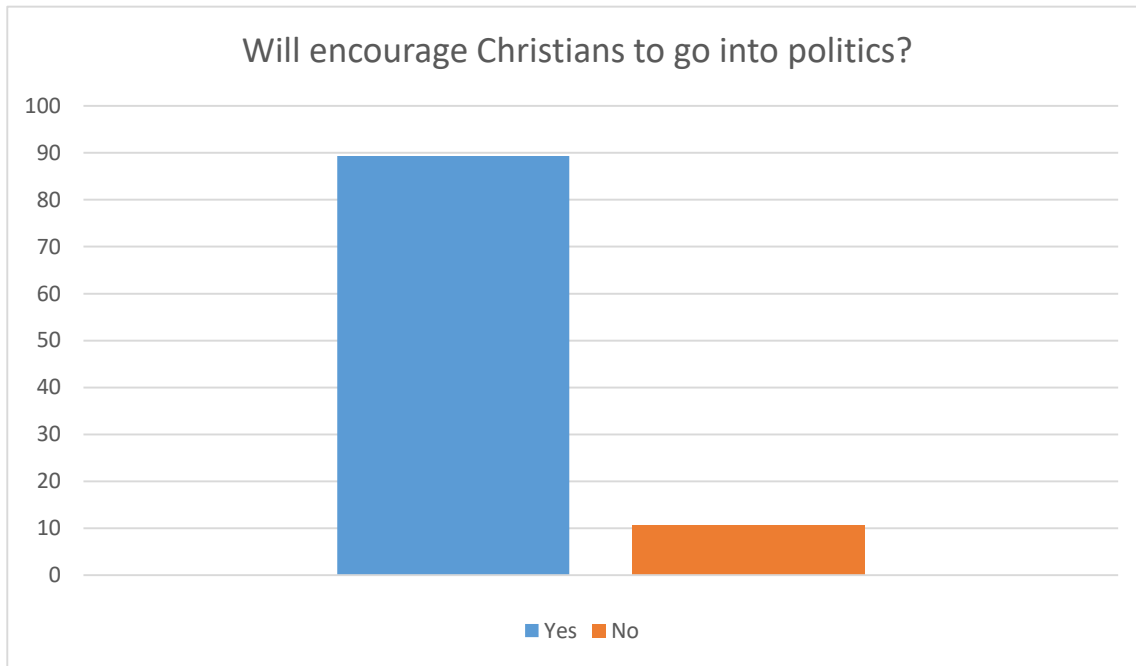
and attitude are informed by the Holy Bible.⁵¹ Also, in reference to some of the teachings of Jesus Christ, the other KI stated that the COP holds that “Christians are not of the world, however, they live in the world.” He adds that the church believes that God has an agenda for the world and Christians are God’s instruments to achieve that agenda. Similarly, the KI of the Anglican church asserted that the church’s position on politics is rooted in the Holy Bible. He cited Romans 13:1-7 and 1 Tim 2:1-6. Among others, these Bible passages teach that leadership and government are of God and Christians are to submit to the authorities. Also, Christians are to pray for all leaders so that they lead and govern well. Therefore, the Anglican Church believes that “Christians should be interested in politics and participate so that the nation will be governed in peace, justice, righteousness and prosperity. On their position of Christians and politics, all the 27 politicians interviewed were of the view that politics is consistent with the Christian faith.

The two main reasons given were that there are many examples of leaders and many teachings on leadership in the Bible. The most common biblical leaders cited were Joseph, Esther, Daniel, and Nehemiah, and the most common Bible passages they referred to were Romans 13:1-7; 1 Tim 2:1-3 and Matthew 5:13-16. There are three main thoughts expressed in these passages. Firstly, government or leadership is of God and Christians are to submit to it. Secondly, Christians are to pray for all leaders so that they govern in righteousness. Thirdly, Christians are the ‘salt and light’ in the world and should influence it. It is worthy of note that, all the 27 politicians interviewed said that one of their main goals and hopes in politics was, to influence the political sphere with Christian principles and be examples to young Christians who aspire to become politicians. These essentially capture the position of the clergy and their churches. Also, these biblical texts were the most common passages referred to by all the clergy. In addition, two hundred and sixty-eight (268) of the congregants surveyed, representing 89.3 percent were of the view that Christians can join politics or can become politicians, and influence the political sphere, while Thirty-two (32) representing 10.7 percent said they will not encourage or support Christians to go into politics (Table 2 and Figure. 1).

Table 2. Will you encourage Christians to go into politics?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	268	89.3	89.3	89.3
No	32	10.7	10.7	100
Total	100	100	100	

⁵¹ Interview with KI5 on 18th April, 2022.

Figure 1. Will encourage Christians to go into politics?

Source: Field Study 2022

The expectation of all the clergy, all the politicians and the majority of the congregants that, Christians can influence politics with Christian values, show that the respondents believe the values are resources needed in the political sphere. And that they are nurtured and inculcated in the Christian by the church hence they expect Christian politicians to live by these. It was on this basis that the churches promoted and encouraged their members to actively engage in politics including partisan politics. These churches, therefore, directly and indirectly, mobilised their congregants for political engagements. This supports the views of Greenberg,⁵² McKenzie,⁵³ and Jones-Correa,⁵⁴ that church can serve as avenue for political mobilisation and participation. Also, the study posited that the view of the clergy and churches on Christian participation in politics could have implications for their attitude toward their members who enter politics. Therefore, it sought to ask whether the church and hence the clergy have a responsibility towards their members who are into politics, and how they have carried it out.

Responsibility of the Church towards Christian Politicians

All the members of the clergy were of the view that their specific denominations and the church, in general, have a role to play towards Christian politicians in their political life and practice. KI6 opined "Christian politicians need the church's support, and the Catholic makes an effort to play that role in reaching out to its members in politics." KI8 stated, "politicians are our members; we have to care for them and disciple them."⁵⁵ Also, KI5 said "the church must actively get involved in the lives of Christian politicians, and consciously train them..."⁵⁶ In addition, KI7 said, "I believe the church has a role to play..." The three most common roles the clergy expected the church to play were: to engage Christian politicians on church and society matters; to discuss biblical tenets on governance; and to challenge them on what the church and the nation expect of them. On this same question, all the 27 politicians interviewed did not only believe that the church has a role to play but also expected them

⁵² Greenberg, "The Church and the Revitalization of Politics and Community," 377.

⁵³ McKenzie, "Self-Selection, Church Attendance, and Local Civic Participation," 479.

⁵⁴ Jones-Correa, "Political Participation: Does Religion Matter?" 764.

⁵⁵ Interview with KI8

⁵⁶ Interview with KI5.

to play the role effectively. There were several roles they expected the church to play which were summarised into three. Firstly, church leaders are to show interest in them, and encourage and assure them of their support. Secondly, the church should collaborate with politicians to discuss key political issues and mobilise young Christians into politics. Thirdly, the church needs to consciously and regularly provide ‘spiritual’ backing for them through prayers. RPP8 opined that the church should “make conscious efforts to teach, encourage, follow up and strongly support Christian politicians through prayers.” In addition, RPP4 was of the view that “the church is responsible for its members including politicians... it has to engage politicians and encourage them.”

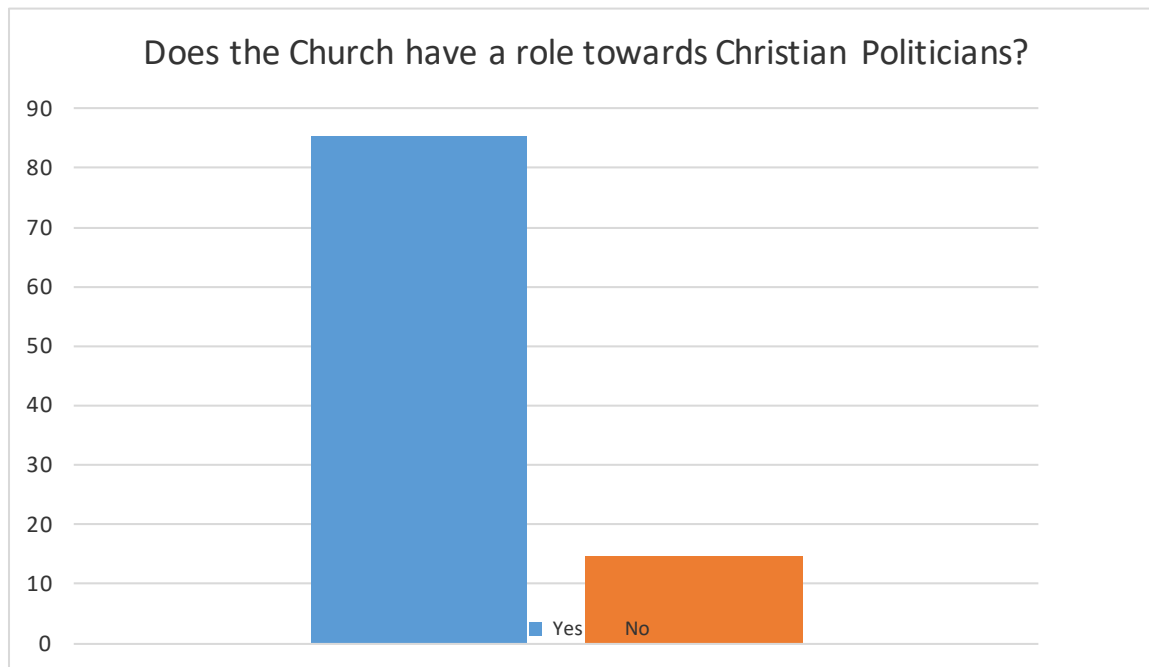
The survey data on whether the church has a role to play towards politicians is presented in Table 3 and Figure 2. Two hundred and fifty-six (256) of the respondents, representing 85.3 percent said yes. This means an overwhelming majority of the congregants were of the view that the church has a role to play towards Christian politicians. Also, the respondents were asked to give at least one role they expected the church to play in the life of Christian politicians. The first three common roles they stated were: the church to instil godly values and guide them in policy-making decisions; the church to engage and team up with them to mentor and groom the youth who are interested in politics; and the church to provide prayer support for them. The argument that the church has a responsibility towards its members who enter politics has been advanced by William et al.⁵⁷

Table 3. Does the Church have a role towards Christian Politicians?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	256	85.3	85.3	85.3
No	44	14.7	14.7	100
Total	100	100	100	

Source: Field Study 2022

Figure 2 – Does the Church have a role towards Christian Politicians?



Source: Field Study 2022.

⁵⁷ Colin W. Williams, *Where in the World?* (USA: Publication Services of National Council of Churches, 1963), 79-80; Bob Moffitt and Karla Tesch, *If Jesus Were Mayor: Transformation and the Local Church* (India: Harvest, 2005), 119, 121; John Jusu, *Developing Transformational Leaders*, in *African Christian Leadership: Realities Opportunities and Impact*, eds., Robert J. Priest and Kirimi Barine (Carlisle: Langham Global Library, 2019), 212.

The roles the clergy outlined were based on their expectations of the politicians while the expectations of the politicians of the clergy were based on their experience and needs in the political arena. Also, the expected role of the church from the congregants (survey respondents) overlap that of the clergy and the Christian politicians. The three different research respondents expected the church to engage Christian politicians on the need and how to let their Christian beliefs and values influence their political practice; thus bringing out the social and political relevance of the church's teachings. This is in consonance with Djupe and Grant's assertion that drawing the public and political consequences of church activities and teachings could enhance members political participation.⁵⁸ It is supported by the views of Metz⁵⁹ and Welker⁶⁰ that, Christian teachings must be socially relevant and engage the public sphere. Also, it was evident that the respondents wanted the church to encourage and mobilise more Christians especially the youth to get into politics. This can be supported by the stance of Brown and Brown⁶¹, and Djupe and Grant⁶², that church attendance alone does not promote political participation; the church has to be deliberate about it. One practical means to promote this, is for the church to have political discussions as asserted by Scheufele, Nisbert, and Brossard.⁶³ Further, the study discovered that, there were three main means the churches adopted to play their role towards the Christian politicians. These were, general preaching and teachings, personal pastoral engagements, and special programmes for politicians. Each of the churches employed at least one of these means in their engagements with their members who are politicians. However, the availability of the Christian politician is key if the clergy and hence the church can play the role effectively. The commitment of the clergy themselves to this pursuit is equally important.

Involvement of Christian politicians in Church activities

To begin with, time constraints and availability especially on the part of Christian politicians, is and would continue to be a challenge to the engagement between them and the church. During the study, the clergy mentioned that the busy schedules of the politicians made it difficult in getting them for engagements, and to effectively play their roles. Also, 10.7% of the survey respondents said they will not encourage Christians to go into politics. One of the key reasons was that politics involves a lot of time investments hence it will take Christians away from the church. These respondents acknowledged the fact that political involvement requires quality time investments. Similarly, 89.3% of the survey respondents who said they will encourage Christians to go into politics admitted that it involves time. However, they did not see it as a reason to discourage Christian participation but rather a necessary challenge that has to be addressed to ensure political influence and faithfulness to the church and one's faith. Politics and time investment have to be understood and put in proper perspective and contexts. Investing quality time to participate in party meetings at various levels, electioneering campaigns, and personal engagement at the grassroots are an essential part of politics. This is in consonance with the views of Ana Pontes, Matt Henn and Mark D. Griffiths,⁶⁴ Quaidoo⁶⁵, Ludasen⁶⁶ and Radu and Tofalvi⁶⁷, all of whom argue that to be effective and to influence the political sphere, one will need to

⁵⁸ Djupe and Grant, "Religious Institutions and Political Participation in America," 303.

⁵⁹ Metz, *Faith in History and Society: toward a practical fundamental theology*, 89.

⁶⁰ Welker "The Future Tasks of Political Theology," 75.

⁶¹ Brown and Brown, "Faith and Works: Church-Based Social Capital Resources and African American Political Activism," 617.

⁶² Djupe and Grant, "Religious Institutions and Political Participation in America," 303

⁶³ Scheufele et al "Social Structure and Citizenship: Examining the Impacts of Social Setting, Network Heterogeneity, and Informational Variables on Political Participation," 315.

⁶⁴ Ana Pontes, Matt Henn, and Mark Griffiths, "Towards a Conceptualization of Young People's Political Engagement: A Qualitative Focus Group Study," *Societies* 8, no. 1 (March 8, 2018): 4, <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc8010017>.

⁶⁵ Quaidoo, *The Experience of Politics: A Manual for Ghanaian and African Politicians*, 28-29.

⁶⁶ Lundasen, "Religious Participation and Civic Engagement in a Secular Context: Evidence from Sweden on the Correlates of Attending Religious Services," 1.

⁶⁷ Radu and Tofalvi, *Religious determinants of political participation in Poland and Romania*,

dedicate quality time to participate intensively and extensively. Involvement in church activities and encouragement by the church may prepare and mobilise Christians for political participation. However, once they get involved in politics, their time, and involvement in church activities may decrease because they need to invest more time into their political role. The study found out that the level of involvement of Christian politicians in political activities on one hand and church activities on the other hand, depended on four main factors namely; political role, political season, individual priority, and follow up by the church.

Political Role and Political Season

Different political roles and positions at both the government and political party levels require different levels of responsibilities and hence time investment. The roles of Members of Parliament, Municipal and District Chief Executives, national and constituency party executives and Ministers of State, relatively require more time than local party executives. Twenty (22) of the politicians, representing 81.48 percent, said they attended church regularly in their local churches. 77.27 percent of these were local party executives and delegates. One hundred and twenty-five (125) out of the three hundred (300) congregants surveyed (RPc) said they knew some members of their local churches who were politicians. 40 percent of this number said the politicians were regular in church and 44 percent said they were in church occasionally while 16 percent said they rarely attended church (Table 4 and Figure 3). The claims of the RPc mean that 60 percent of the Christian politicians in their churches attended church either occasionally or rarely. The study also found out that most of the 40 percent who were regular in the church were local party leaders. Moreover, one Municipal Chief Executive and two District Chief Executives, said they attended church regularly but several times not in their own local churches. All were part of their 'political responsibilities'. RPp1, said "I have to attend several programmes of churches, especially upon invitations. This is necessary and 'has political returns'."⁶⁸ RPp12 said, "I am not regular in my local church due to programmes of other churches, weddings, harvest and funeral invitations." "also pressure from party structure and hierarchy, take a lot of my time and away from the church", RPp12 added.

Further, two (2) of the politicians, RPp23 and RPp26, who were former Members of Parliament, had similar experiences as that of the Municipal and District Chief Executives. However, they spent less time in their Constituency hence local churches as compared with the Chief Executives. Closely related to the political position and role, is the political season, which also influences the participation in church by Christian politicians. Virtually, all politicians irrespective of their position and roles, become very busy during electioneering campaigns and voting days. But those with specific and leading roles are the busiest. During this period, even those who are usually regular in the church are mostly absent because the political activities and demands take a chunk of their time. All twenty-seven (27) Christian politicians expressed this vividly. For example, RPp13 stated "campaign trips, other commitments and responsibilities... I hardly go to church during these periods." Also, RPp25 said "I used to be in church every day but lately, I miss church several times due to political activities..."

This is underscored by the assertion that political parties want and require their members to actively take part in all their activities,⁶⁹ recruit and mobilise others to join⁷⁰ and volunteer to help in political campaigns.⁷¹ This also means that Christian politicians have to take a conscious decision at certain times to spend more time in political activities and little or no time in church activities. However, how long and how far a Christian politician stays completely or partially from the church

⁶⁸ Interview with RPp1

⁶⁹ Pontes, Henn, and Griffiths, "Towards a Conceptualization of Young People's Political Engagement: A Qualitative Focus Group Study."

⁷⁰ Quaidoo, *The Experience of Politics: A Manual for Ghanaian and African Politicians*, 28-29.

⁷¹ Lundasen, "Religious Participation and Civic Engagement in a Secular Context: Evidence from Sweden on the Correlates of Attending Religious Services," 9.

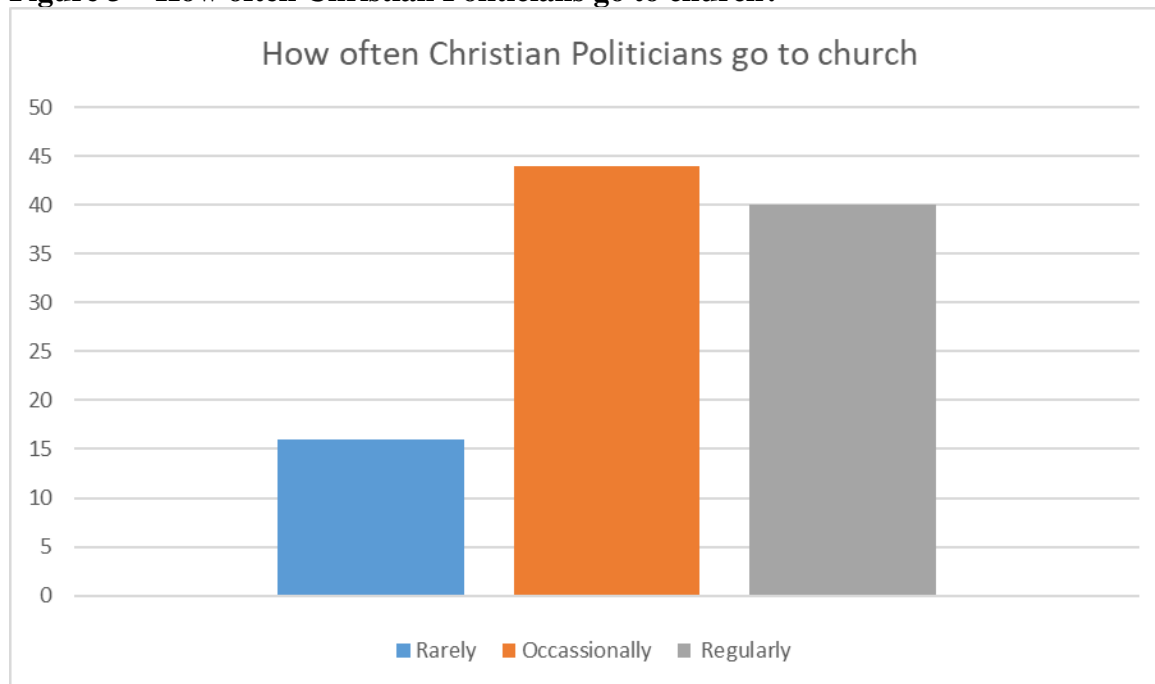
will depend on the value they place on their faith and involvement in the church.

Table 4. How Often Christian Politicians attend church

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Rarely	20	16.0	16.0	16.0
Occasionally	55	44.0	44.0	60.0
Regularly	50	40.0	40.0	100
Total	125	100	100	

Source: Field Study 2022

Figure 3 – How often Christian Politicians go to church?



Source: Field Study 2022

Individual Priority

The study found out that in spite of the busy schedules of politicians stemming from their specific roles, and during electioneering campaigns, the individual's priorities and value placed on his or her 'spirituality' and faith, play a role in their involvement in church. Politicians including parliamentarians (MPs) and Ministers of state are not always in party meetings or engaged in direct political activities. They are sometimes available. Parliament even go on recess to allow them time to be with their constituents, and their local churches are part of the constituents. The thrust of the matter is that politicians have the time they can spend in church and participate in church activities albeit less than Christians in many other professions and occupations. According to the clergy, some politicians go to church and /or call on them only when there is an election. Their main motive is to canvas for the support of their churches and the Christian community in general. It was not limited to those with constituency, regional and national responsibility but also found among those with local positions. This assertion was corroborated by the Christian politicians interviewed. Two (2) MPs and three (3) party executives who were privy to the activities of the Parliament Christian Fellowship (PCF), said that the majority of Christian Parliamentarians were not interested and did not attend the services of the PCF. On their part, the two MPs said they were active in the PCF and made time for their local churches and other Christian meetings in spite of the high demand their political responsibilities placed on them. According to them, it was based on their own personal convictions and faith. Such Christian

politicians were also encouraged by their churches' interest and commitment toward them and their political involvement.

Follow up by the Church

As stated earlier, the number one expectation of the Christian politicians from the church was for the clergy to show interest in them, and encourage and support them. They bemoaned the fact there are several Christians who are 'abandoned' by the church as soon as they enter politics. This is compounded when their political responsibilities often take them away from church activities. One of the politicians said that he knew several Christian politicians who had virtually left the church and were concentrating on politics because the church did not 'show interest' in them and literally abandoned them. While the clergy criticised some Christian politicians who go to church only during election periods, the politicians on their part, complained that the clergy invited them to play a role in the church mostly when there was fundraising. For example, RPP12 said "churches expect you to contribute more money. In saying 'you are a politician' they subtly communicate that they expect you to contribute a substantial amount of money to the church. They will tell you 'come and grace the occasion' but it is money they are expecting from you."⁷² This sentiment is reflected in the assertion of one of the KI of COP. He said there was high patronage and positive response from the politicians in the church towards their special programme, the Executive Conference "though the politicians are busy, their response has been overwhelming; 60-70 percent of them attend the Conference."⁷³ He asserts that, it was partly because the politicians realised that "it was a departure from bringing them to church only when we want to take from them..."⁷⁴

It was evident that the clergy interviewed generally appreciated the time constraints on the part of the politicians. Also, though the clergy and all the politicians agreed that, both must show commitment, three of the clergy, KI5, KI8 and KI7, stressed that the greater responsibility rests with the church (clergy). They asserted that their interactions with Christian politicians showed that many of them were asking and looking forward to regular engagements with the church. They argued therefore that, if the church would show commitment and lead the way, some of the politicians would respond positively. The study discovered that the Methodist Church and ICGC made little or no efforts to follow up and track their members who were into politics. One of the KI of the Methodist Church said "we have a role to play towards our Christian politicians but the Methodist Church has not done well..." Five (5) out of the six (6) RPP of the Methodist Church had a good relationship with their leaders but the leaders rarely engaged them on their political life and political issues. Similarly, only one (1) of the three (3) RPP of the ICGC was engaged periodically by his church leaders. The Catholic Church and Anglican Church were deliberate and regularly engaged their members who were politicians. However, their target was mainly Members of Parliament, Ministers of state and other top-level politicians. This was evident in the fact that all the six (6) RPP of the Anglican Church and five (5) out of the six (6) in the Catholic Church knew little or nothing about these programmes of engagements and had not attended any of them. They were all within the middle and grassroots levels of politics. The COP was also intentional and committed to regular engagements with the politicians within the church. They targeted politicians at all levels of the political ladder including young people who aspired to go into politics. For the COP, one of the KI said "pastors have been told to 'chase' the politicians in the church because they are busy..."⁷⁵ This position was perhaps affirmed by the fact

⁷² Interview with RPP12

⁷³ The Executive Conference is meeting between the leadership of the church and all its members who into politics. they have meeting every two years at the Pentecost Convention Centre. The meeting is used for training, discussion, encouragement and prayers. The mode is open forums, teaching, workshops and presentations by both the clergy and some of the experienced politicians. It is a forum for the politicians to share their challenges among themselves and with the church leadership, and discuss. The focus is how they can stand and influence the political sphere with Christian values, and share their Christian faith with others.

⁷⁴ Interview with KI8

⁷⁵ Interview with RPP8

that 26 out of the 27 Christian politicians interviewed said, they will support and welcome special times of engagement with the church outside the general worship services. Again all six (6) politicians in the COP said they knew of the church's special programmes and four (4) of them, representing 67 percent, said they had attended the Executive Conference twice or more. This corroborated with one of the KI's claim's that 60-70 percent of the politicians in the church had been attending the Conference. Also, two (2) of them said that the engagement with church leaders had helped them to maintain their principles and, in taking certain political decisions. Therefore, through his experience with the Executive Conference, the KI of the COP was convinced that if the clergy show a keen interest in the welfare of the politicians, many of them would respond.⁷⁶ The paper strongly aligns with this position and call. Generally, the church's political engagement is enhanced and largely accepted when it is motivated by a wider interest in the society and the common good.⁷⁷ It is also underscored by the expectations of all the twenty-seven (27) politicians that, the church led by the clergy should show interest in them and their political life.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Stemming from the findings, the paper recommends that churches that promote political mobilization and engagement of their members should understand that their members who become active in politics will be less frequent in church. This may not necessarily mean that their commitment to the church has waned but rather it is due to the demands of the political sphere. The clergy has pastoral, spiritual and moral responsibilities towards all their members including politicians. Therefore, they especially those who promote political engagements, should not shirk this responsibility and 'abandoned' their members who are active politicians. Similarly, Christian politicians should not abandon the church in pursuit of their political goals. They have to be committed, open and ready to receive the hand the clergy and the church extend to them.

The time constraint challenge could be addressed through personal pastoral engagements. It would be helpful for the clergy at each local level to heed the "chase them" call by the COP. They can regularly call the politicians to encourage them, assure them of their support for the right cause and pray for them. It was evident in this study that Christian politicians need the church not only for votes but also for their moral and psychological support, and regular prayers for spiritual protection and guidance. Some Christian politicians have made an impact and maintained their Christian faith and witness because their church leaders "chase them.". All of these will largely depend on whether the church accepts that it has a responsibility towards Christian politicians and is committed to that. It would also depend on the value Christian politician place on their relationship with and involvement in the church to their own spiritual and political advancements.

CONCLUSION

The paper's purpose was to examine how the political participation of Christians in Ghana affects their involvement in church activities. Based on both primary and secondary data, the paper has argued that active church involvement and active political engagement require quality time; spending more time with one can be at the expense of the other. On the other hand, religious adherents who see both as important for their political and 'spiritual' life, will have to balance their time. However, irrespective of that, such persons may spend less time on religious activities than other religious adherents who are not political activists. This has implications both, for churches that encourage their congregants as well as Christians who actively engage in politics.

⁷⁶ Interview with RPP8

⁷⁷ Anna Grzymala-Busse, "Weapons of the Meek," *World Politics* 68, no. 1 (January 2, 2016): 1–36, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887115000301>.

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